

AWARD[®] 6

Communications Overview

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1 Introduction

This document provides an overview of the communication mechanisms within AWARD 6 that allow the Authority to communicate both internally (amongst Project Users) and externally (with Suppliers) and which provide a full audit trail within the tool. This document is intended for use for Project Managers (this includes Project Support Users), who are responsible for managing these interactions. This document focuses on summarising how the mechanisms work together.

1.1 Supplier Interaction

There are three types of communication available between the Authority and Suppliers. These allow questions from Suppliers, questions from Project Managers and announcements to all Suppliers.

Clarifications

Clarifications are raised by Suppliers to ask a question of the Authority. They are received by Project Managers. A Supplier can indicate that they regard the question they are asking as commercially sensitive to them and should not be shared with the other Suppliers

Notifications

Notifications are sent by Project Managers to issue general information and are received by all Suppliers. They are used to broadcast Authority-defined messages (Notices) to all Suppliers, to inform Suppliers that the Authority has published new documentation (Document Change Notices); and to inform Suppliers of the Authority's response to Clarifications raised by Suppliers (Clarification Notices).

Authority Queries

Authority Queries are sent by Project Managers to ask a question of a specific Supplier; they are not visible to other Suppliers.

1.2 Internal Communications

There are three types of communication available internally; Messages from Project Managers; Issues raised by Assessors; and Tasks to be undertaken by Project users.

Messages

Messages are raised by Project Managers to internal users in the project.

Issues

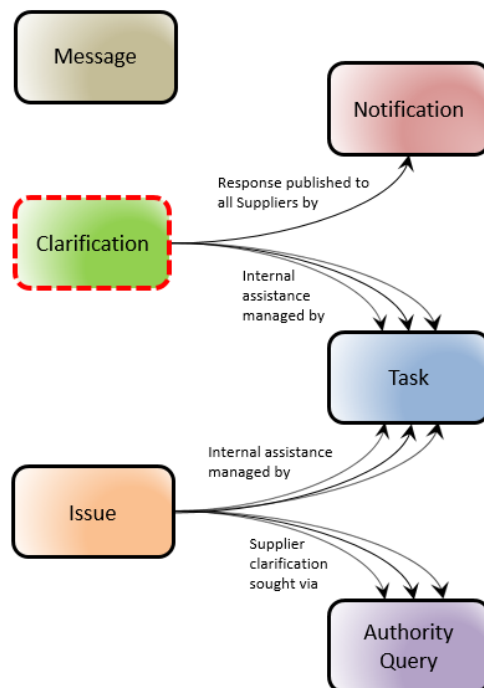
Issues are raised by Assessors, usually from their Answer Sheet. These are questions relating to the evaluation and are sent to Project Managers.

Tasks

Tasks are created by a Project Manager to ask a question of or assign a job to a specific internal person or group of people within the project. These can be standalone requests, or linked to Issues, or Clarifications and Authority Queries (see below).

1.3 How the Communication Mechanisms work together

Whilst all of the six communication mechanisms can be used independently of each other, in many cases they are used in combination. The diagram below illustrates how the mechanisms interact with and support each other. This interaction is stored in AWARD as a link between two mechanisms.



The arrows on this diagram represent the links between the communication mechanisms. They have the following meanings:

- ☐ Messages are stand alone and are a one-way means of communication from the PM to other Project Users. They are not linked to any of the other mechanisms.
- ☐ A Clarification that is not commercially sensitive to the Supplier who created it can be published, together with the Authority's answer, to all of the Suppliers in a competition by linking it to a Notification. There can be no more than one Notification linked to a Clarification. Likewise, there can be no more than one Clarification linked to a Notification.
- ☐ If the PM needs internal (to the Authority) assistance to answer a Clarification, then this can be requested and managed by linking the Clarification to one or more Tasks. This assistance may be to help answer the question or to approve the release of the Authority's proposed answer to the Supplier(s). There can be many Tasks linked to a Clarification, but only one Clarification linked to a Task.
- ☐ Similarly, if the PM needs internal assistance to answer an Issue, then this can be requested and managed by linking the Issue to one or more Tasks. There can be many Tasks linked to an Issue, but only one Issue linked to a Task.
- ☐ If the PM needs to ask a question of a Supplier in order to respond to an Issue then this can be sought by linking it to one or more Authority Queries. There can be many Authority Queries linked to an Issue, but only one Issue linked to an Authority Query.

2 Responding to Supplier Clarifications

During the ITN Phase of the procurement a significant part of communication between the Authority and the Suppliers is as the result of the Suppliers asking questions of the Authority by creating Clarifications. This section describes the sequence of actions that the Authority needs to take in order to respond to Supplier Clarifications.

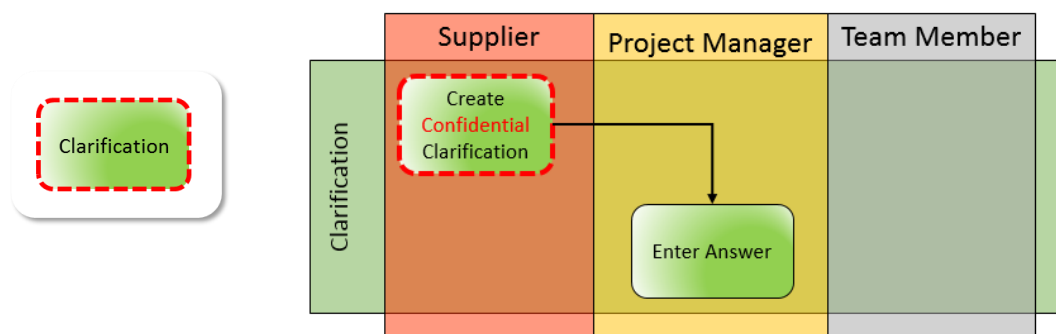
The way in which the Authority responds to a Supplier Clarification is dependent upon the following:

- ☐ If the Clarification has been marked as confidential by the Supplier, then the other Suppliers are not be informed of the question or the Authority's answer.
- ☐ If the Project Managers need assistance from another member of the project team in order to formulate the Authority's answer or approve the release of the answer, then one or more Tasks are created to request and track the progress of this assistance.

In the majority of cases, the sequence of events needed to respond to a Supplier Clarification is one of the four below. For completeness, there is a section later in this document which shows all the possible Supplier and Authority actions for each of the communication types.

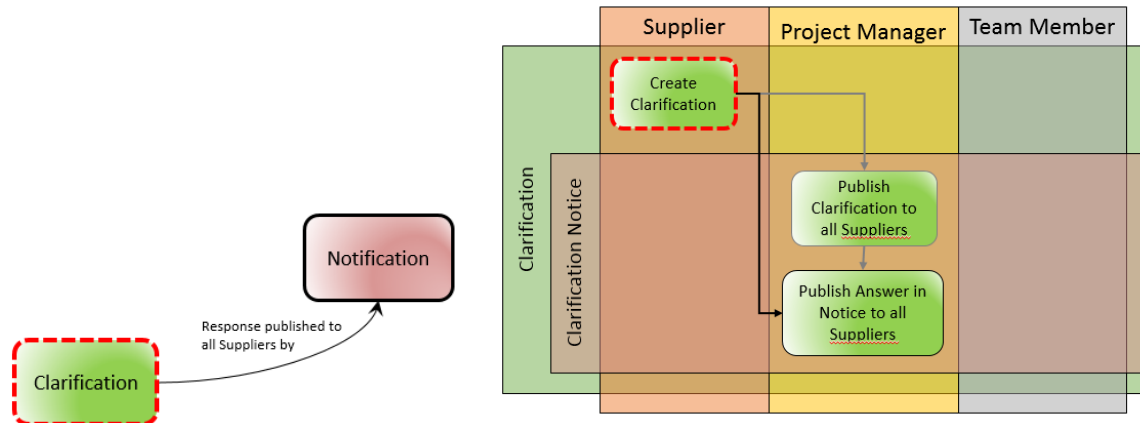
2.1 Confidential Clarification and no assistance required from team

This is the simplest scenario. The PM is able to answer the Supplier's Clarification question without assistance from other members of the team. The PM has accepted the Supplier's statement that the Clarification is confidential and so replies solely to that Supplier.



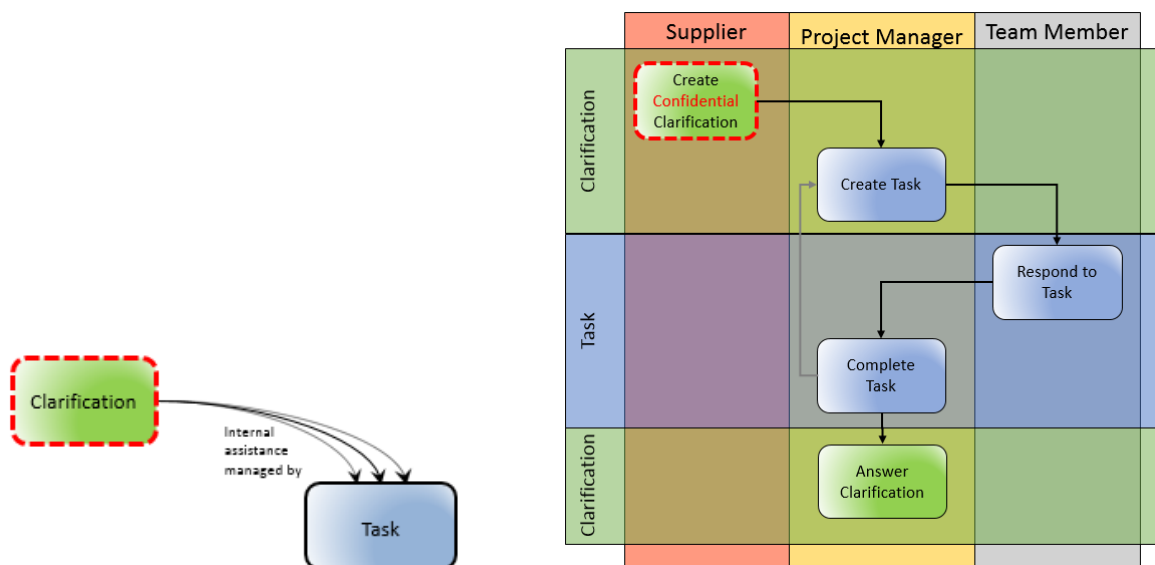
2.2 Non-Confidential Clarification and no assistance required from team

This is the next simplest scenario. As with the previous scenario, the PM is able to answer the Supplier's Clarification question without assistance from other members of the team. This time the Clarification is NOT confidential and so the reply will be published by the PM to all of the Suppliers using a Clarification Notice. The PM can also, optionally, publish the question to all Suppliers before the answer is provided in order to reduce the likelihood of the same question being asked by other Suppliers.



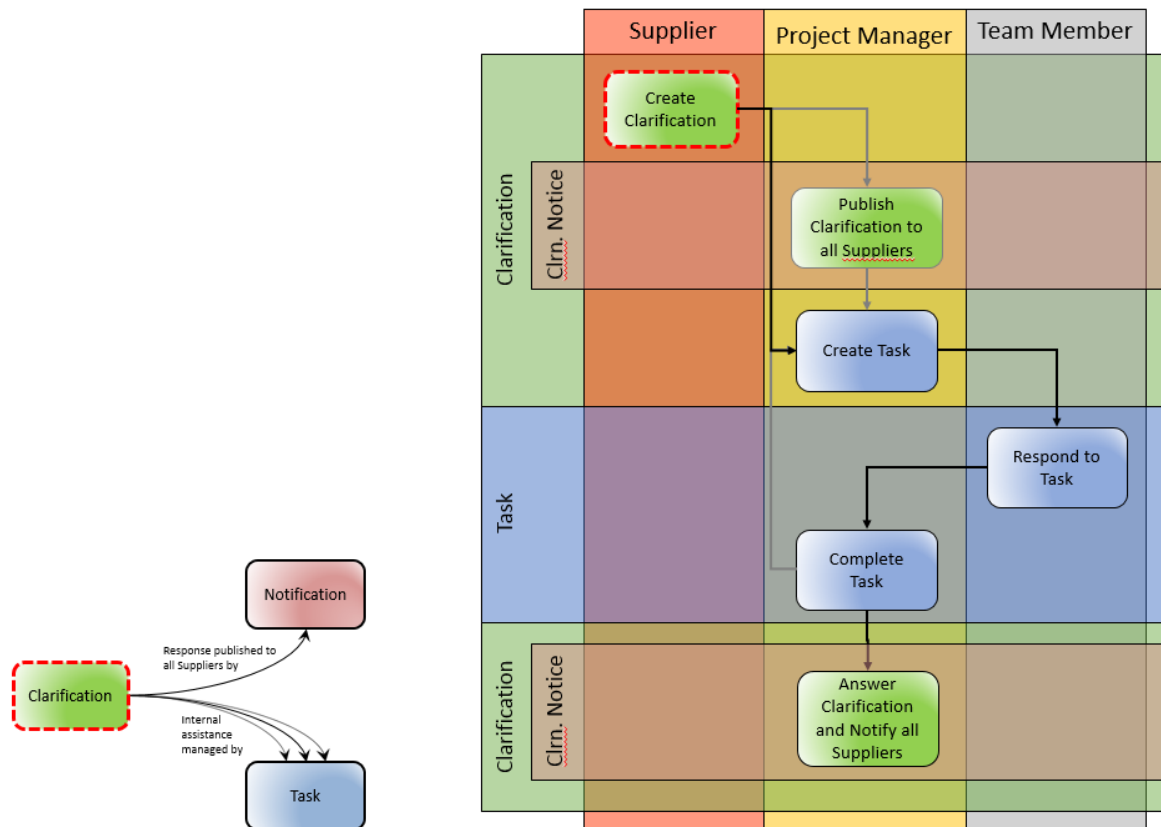
2.3 Confidential Clarification and assistance required from team

In this scenario the PM needs assistance from other members of the team to answer the Supplier's Clarification question. The PM creates a Task to request this assistance from the appropriate part of the project team and receives their response. If necessary, further Tasks are created upon other parts of the project team until a response to the Clarification has been developed and approved for release to the Supplier. The PM has accepted the Supplier's statement that the Clarification is confidential and so replies solely to that Supplier.



2.4 Non-Confidential Clarification and assistance required from team

This scenario is both the most frequent and complicated. The PM needs assistance from other members of the team to answer the Supplier's Clarification question. The PM creates a Task to request this assistance from the appropriate part of the project team and receives their response. If necessary, further Tasks are created upon other parts of the project team until a response to the Clarification has been developed and approved for release to the Supplier. The Clarification is NOT confidential and so the reply will be published by the PM to all of the Suppliers using a Clarification Notice. The PM can also, optionally, publish the question to all Suppliers before the answer is provided in order to reduce the likelihood of the same question being asked by other Suppliers.



3 Resolving Questions raised by the Authority

As well as the Suppliers asking questions of the Authority, the Authority will also have questions that need to be answered by the Suppliers. Authority queries are the mechanism used to request clarification from Suppliers. After issue of an invitation to the Suppliers (e.g. the Invitation to Negotiate, Revise or Confirm and Best and Final Offer - ITN, ROCO and BAFO respectively) the need to issue Authority Queries will mostly originate from within the Commercial team. After receipt of the Supplier response(s) to the invitation it will mostly be the wider evaluation team who will identify the need to issue Authority Queries. Issues are the mechanism used by members of this Authority team to register a question and request an answer from the Project Managers. The PMs will be able to answer some Issues without requesting assistance from the Suppliers, whilst others will need clarification from the Suppliers using Authority Queries.

This section describes the sequence of actions that the Authority needs to take in order to answer questions identified within its team, including when it needs to ask questions of the Suppliers.

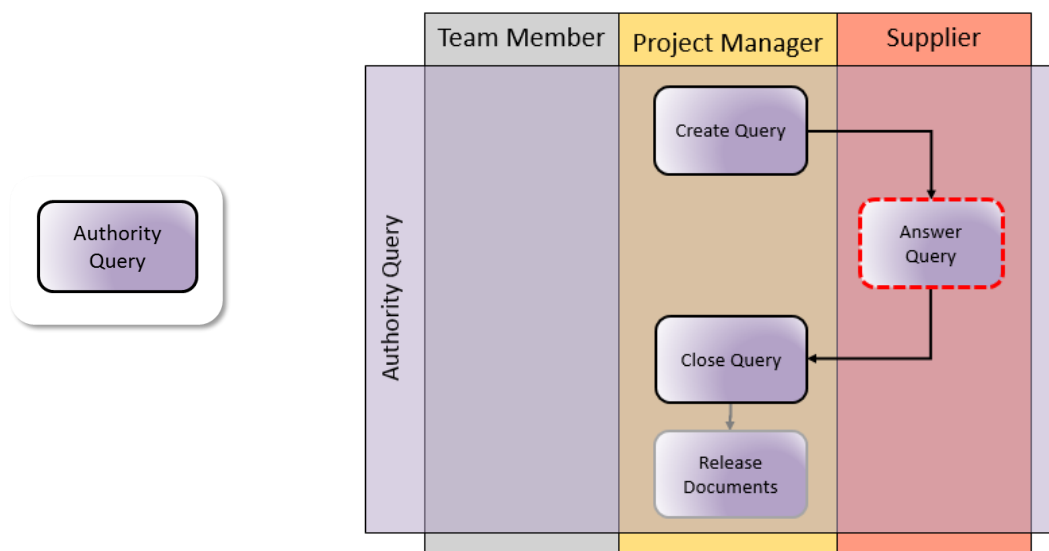
The way in which the Authority handles a question is dependent upon the following:

- ☐ If the question originates within the commercial team then there will not be an Issue and an Authority Query can be created directly. The answer will be directly accessible by those in the commercial team who have visibility of the Authority Queries.
- ☐ If the question originates from the wider assessment team and is captured in an Issue, then the answer will be published to the relevant members of the assessment team via the Issue.
- ☐ If the question raised in an Issue needs clarification from a Supplier, then the PM will create an Authority Query to solicit this information.
- ☐ If the Project Managers need assistance from another member of the project team in order to answer the Issue or verify the Supplier's answer to the Authority Query, then one or more Tasks are created to request and track the progress of this assistance.

In the majority of cases the sequence of events needed to respond to a Supplier Clarification is one of the five below. For completeness, there is a section later in this document which show all the possible Supplier and Authority actions for each of the communication types.

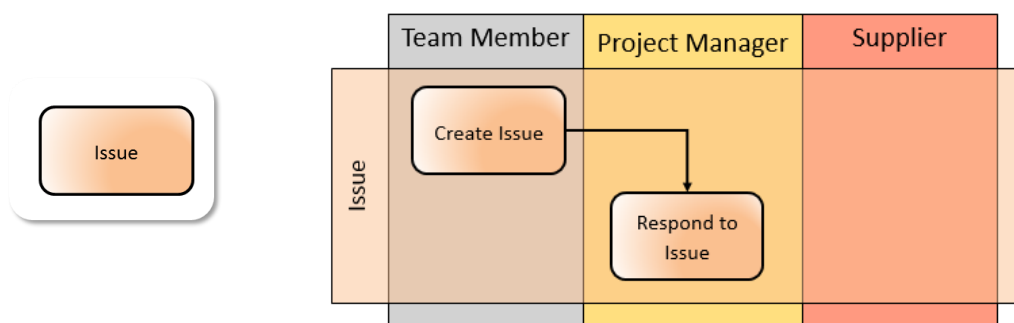
3.1 Standalone Question asked of the Supplier

This is the simplest scenario as the PM is addressing a question raised within the Commercial Team rather than from a member of the assessment team. In this case an Issue has not been created and the PM simply creates an Authority Query to the relevant Supplier. If the Supplier's answer includes attached documents, then the PM may Release them to make them visible to the other members of the team, including the Assessors.



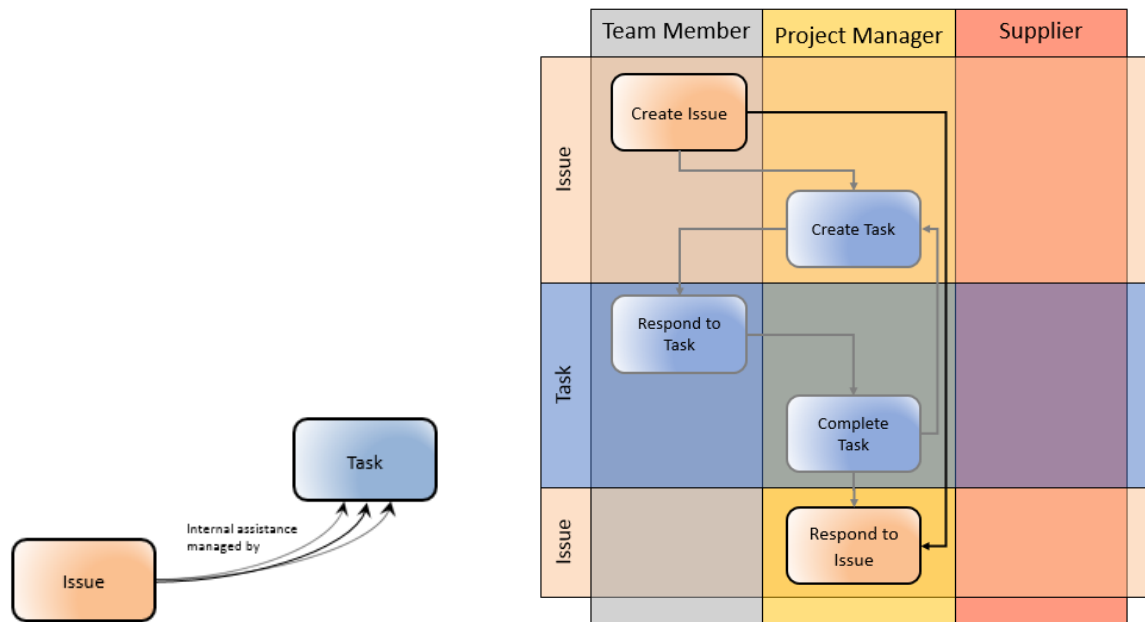
3.2 Issue can be Resolved without Assistance from the team or the Supplier

This is the simplest scenario involving an Issue raised by a member of the team. In this case the PM can answer the question without having to request assistance from either another member of the Authority Team or one of the Suppliers and responds to the Issue directly.



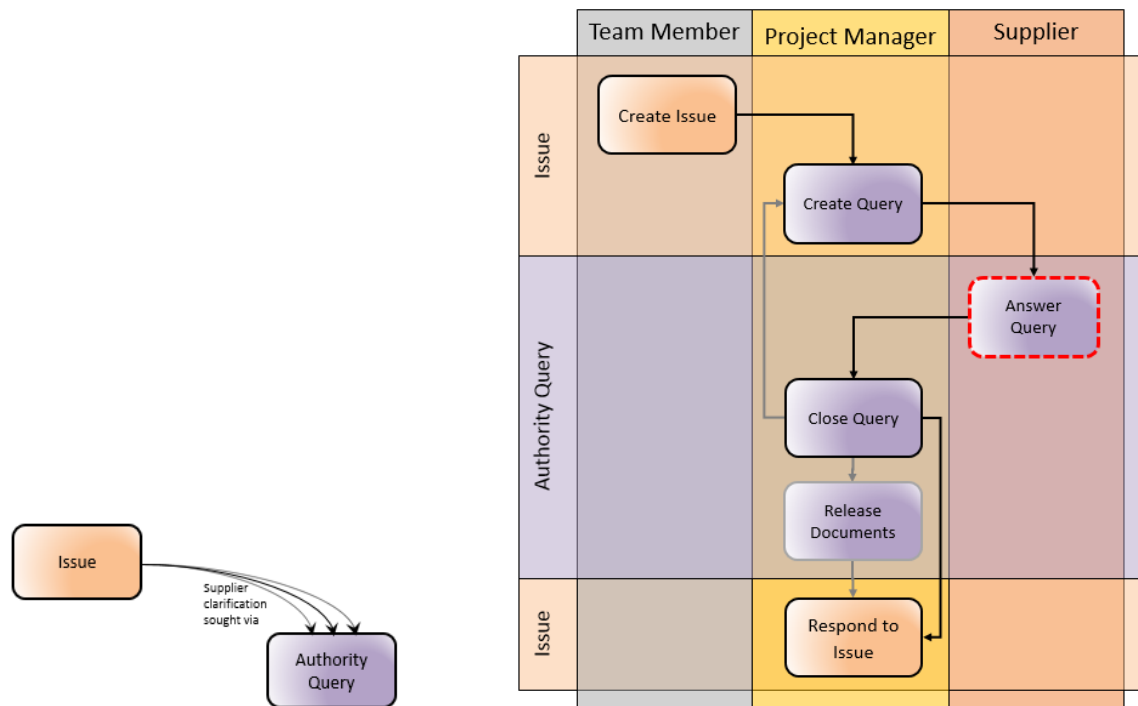
3.3 Issue can be Answered with Assistance from the team but not the Supplier

In this scenario the PM requests assistance from other members of the team by creating one (or more) tasks. The information needed to respond is already available to the Authority and so assistance does not need to be sought from the Supplier.



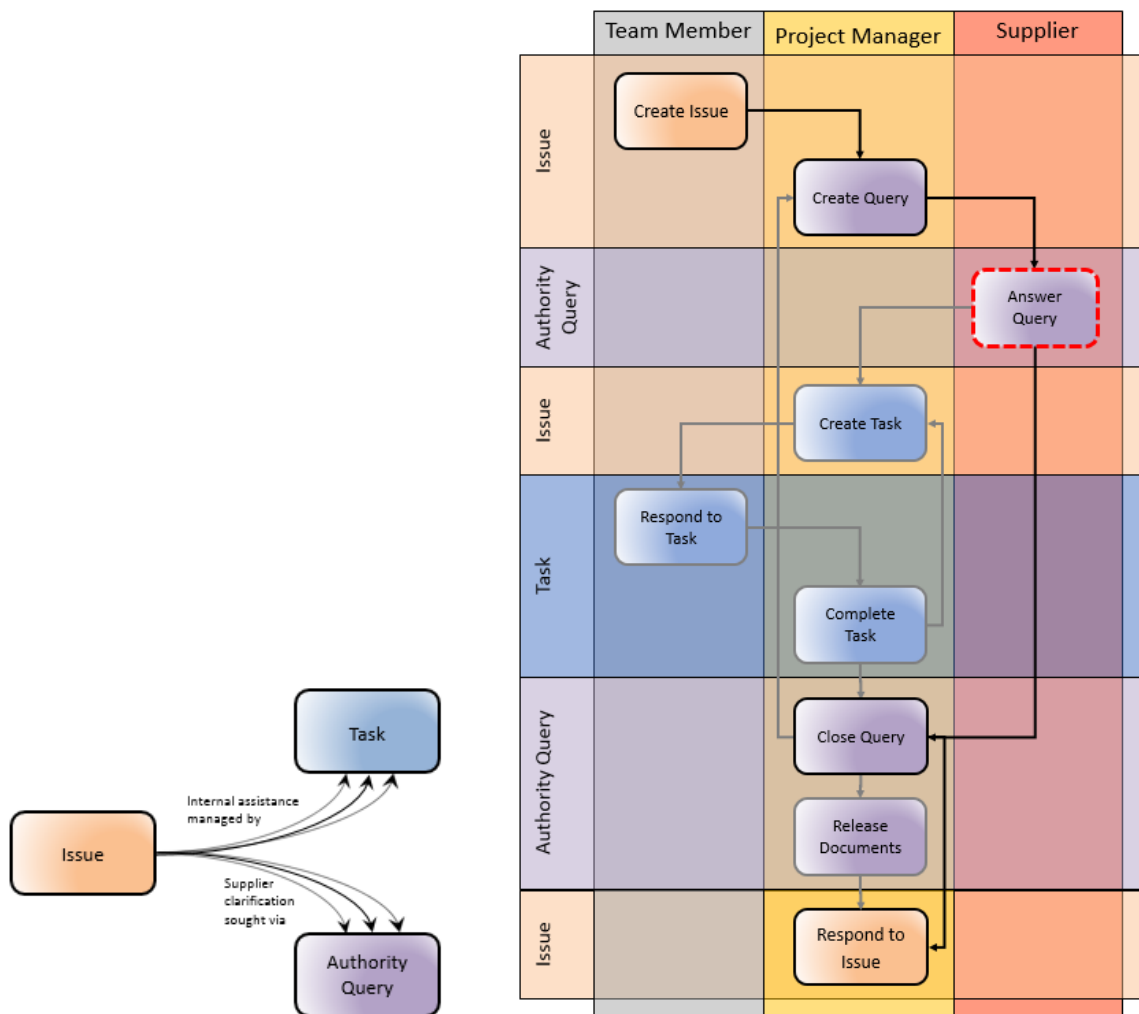
3.4 Issue requires Assistance from the Supplier

In this scenario the PM creates an Authority Query in order to get an answer to the Issue from a Supplier. If the Supplier provides additional documentation as part of their answer (by Attaching them to the Query) then the PM needs to Release them to make them available to other members of the Authority team. Note that if the Supplier's response to the Query does not, in the PM's opinion, answer the question posed then the PM closes that query and creates a new one for the same Supplier to prompt them further.



3.5 Issue requires Assistance from the Supplier and Verification by the team

This is the final and most complex scenario. Once again, the PM creates an Authority Query in order to get an answer to the Issue from a Supplier. This time the PM needs assistance from another member of the team to determine whether the Supplier's answer does indeed answer the question in the original Issue. This is done by creating one (or more) Tasks. If the conclusion is that the Supplier's response does not answer the question posed, then the PM closes that query and creates a new one for the same Supplier to prompt them further. Once an acceptable answer has been received the PM provides this as the answer to the originating Issue (after Releasing any documents provided with the Supplier's response to make them available to the Authority team).



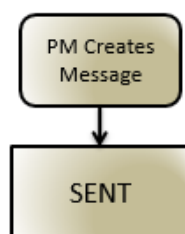
4 Communication Mechanism Actions and State Transitions

The following subsections contain diagrams which illustrate the typical sequence of events using the various AWARD communications. The vertical boxes in the diagrams indicate the person undertaking the action and the horizontal boxes indicate the mechanism being used, whilst the text in the boxes indicates the names of the buttons in AWARD. The usual progression of a communication is indicated with bold borders; optional actions are indicated with pale borders as illustrated in the key below:



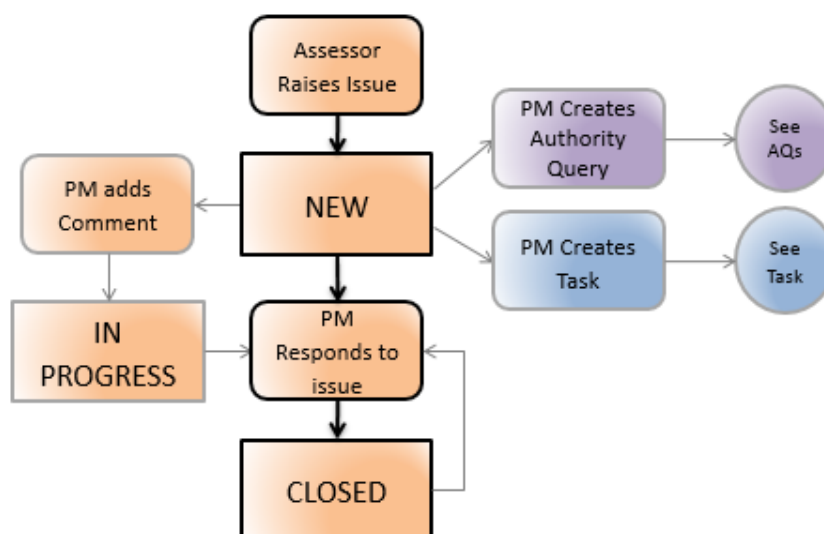
4.1 Messages

Messages are issued by Project Managers and are received by one or more nominate Internal Users.



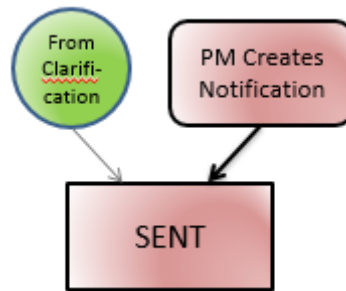
4.2 Issues

Issues are created by an Assessor against a specific Question and Submission. They are received by the Project Managers who can either respond directly or create a linked Task or Authority Query before they go back to the Assessor.



4.3 Notifications

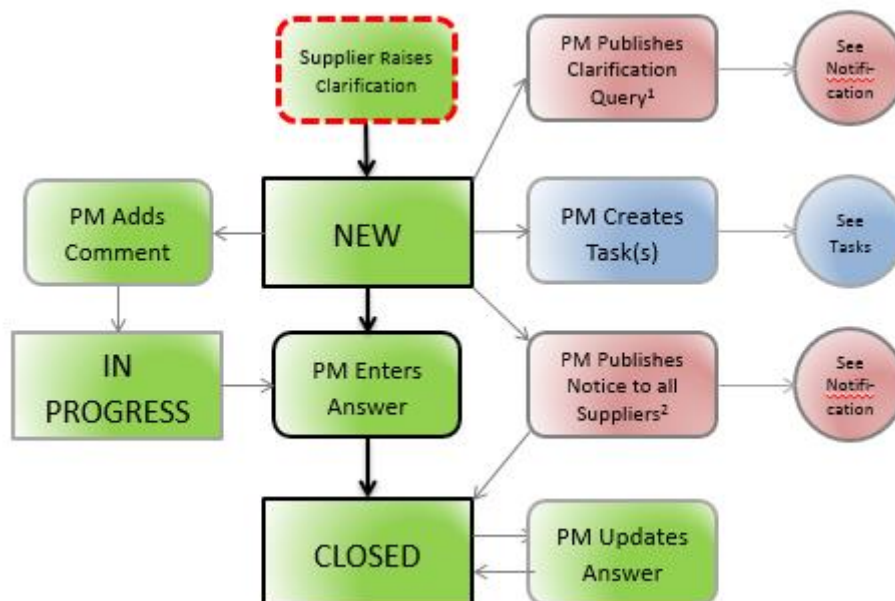
Notifications are issued by Project Managers and are received by all Suppliers.



Note: When using Clarification Notices (see Clarifications) the Notification is sent containing the Clarification question, then updated with the answer once that is entered.

4.4 Clarifications

Clarifications are raised by Suppliers when they have a question and are received by Project Managers. Project Managers can respond directly to the Supplier or create a Task to collect comments from Internal Users. When responding, Project Managers can either respond directly to the individual Supplier or issue a notification to all Suppliers.



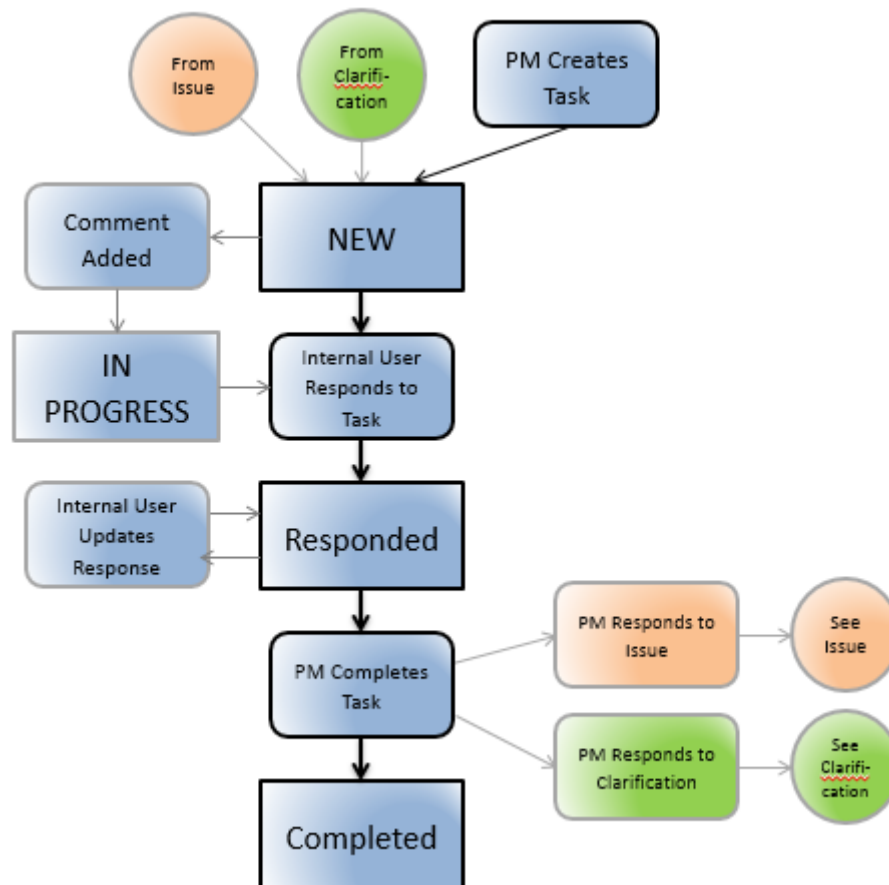
Note: It is not possible to create a Notification from a Confidential Clarification

¹ If created at this stage the Notification just contains the question asked by the Supplier, this allows every Supplier to see what has been asked. This requires Clarification Notices to be enabled.

² If a notification has already been created to publish the question (see ¹) then this updates that original notification with the answer.

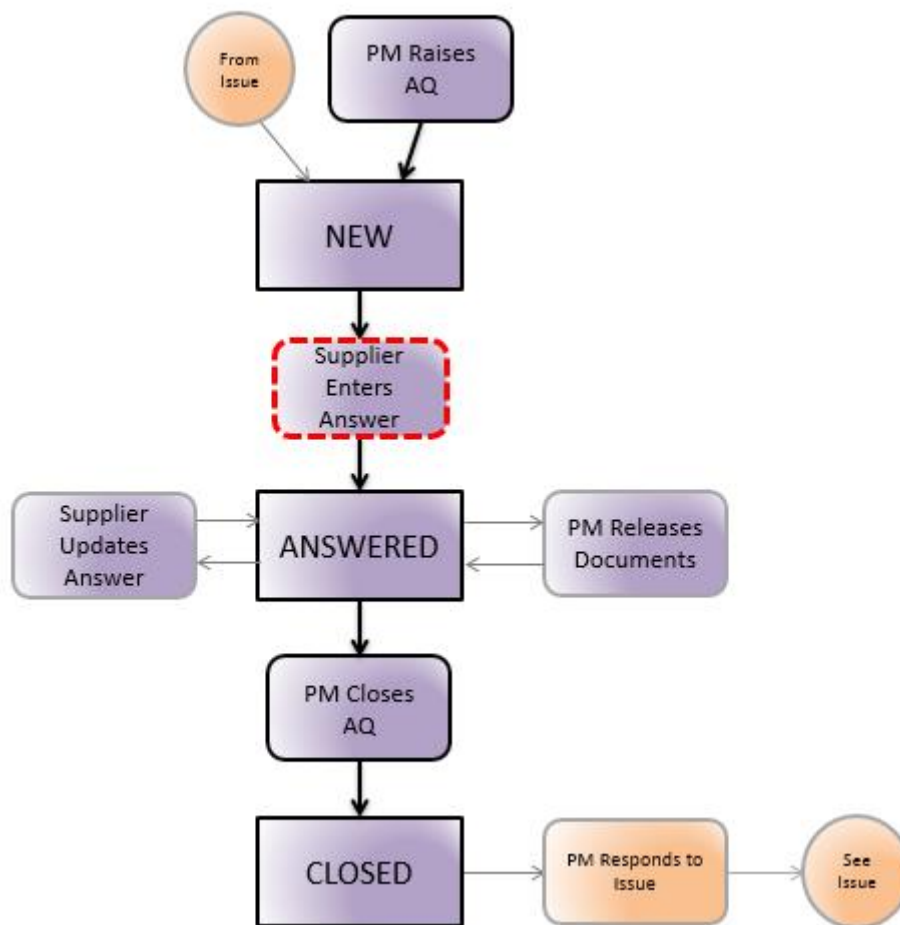
4.5 Tasks

Tasks are raised by Project Managers either independently or from an Issue or Clarification. They are set to an internal user, or group of users for comment and then a final response. Once a response is received then the Project Managers can use that to respond to the Issue or Clarification.



4.6 Authority Queries

Authority Queries are questions raised by Project Managers, either independently or from an Issue. They are sent to a specific Supplier.



5 Attaching Documents

Documents can be attached to the following communication types:

- ☐ Issues
- ☐ Clarifications
- ☐ Authority Queries

5.1 Issues

Project Managers can attach a Document to an Issue as part of their response. If the Issue is associated with a particular Submission then it is only possible to attach Documents which are also associated with that Submission.

Only those Document Groups that are available to the Question with which the Issue is associated is available to attach from.

Documents from the following Document Group types can be attached to an Issue when the Issue is related to a particular Submission:

- ☐ Supplier (in a Portal Project the associated Portal must be UNSEALED)
- ☐ Submission
- ☐ Authority Query

If the Issue is not related to a particular Submission then the following Document Group types can be used:

- ☐ Public
- ☐ Internal

5.2 Clarifications

Suppliers and Project Managers can attach documents to Clarifications. The Documents must either belong to the Supplier raising the Clarification or not be associated with any particular Supplier.

Whilst the Clarification hasn't been answered by the Project Manager, Documents from the following Document Groups can be attached:

Document Group Type	Attached by Project Manager user	Attached by Supplier
Public (Published and Invalidated Documents only)	✓	✓
Supplier (in a Portal Project the associated Portal must be UNSEALED)		✓
Submission	✓	✓
Authority Query (Submitted and Released Documents only)		✓

5.3 Authority Queries

Suppliers and Project Managers can attach documents to Authority Queries. The documents must either belong to the Supplier to whom the Authority Query is addressed or not be associated with any particular Supplier.

Whilst the Query hasn't been answered by the Supplier, Documents from the following Document Groups can be attached:

Document Group Type	Attached by Project Manager user	Attached by Supplier
Public (Published and Invalidated Documents only)	✓	
Supplier (in a Portal Project the associated Portal must be UNSEALED)	✓	✓
Submission	✓	✓
Authority Query (Submitted and Released Documents only)	✓	✓